

(23-28 December 1977). The birds were not seen on the next visit which began on 23 January 1978. We have no knowledge of whether the birds nested.

Rainbow Birds have apparently not been recorded on Rottnest before, because Storr (*Emu*, 64, 1965: 172-180) does not list them in his comprehensive review of the island's avifauna. Black has spent 149 days on Rottnest since August 1974; this is the first time Rainbow Birds have been seen by him on Rottnest. Rainbow Birds are scarce around Perth, sufficiently so for Serventy and Whittell (*Birds of Western Australia*, 1976) to list known local nesting localities. One pair turns up each October in the Tuart forest at Woodman Point, and probably nests there.

### Fairy Tern, *Sterna nereis*

This species' habit of nesting on beaches and other areas without plant cover must entail considerable disturbance. In 1975 and 1977 we observed a breeding colony near Cape Vlamingh, Rottnest Island, adjacent to the main road. This area was not recorded as a breeding site by Storr (*Emu*, 64, 1964: 55-6). On 22 November 1975, the terns were first noted sitting in a group by the road. On 11 December, Black confirmed that nesting was in progress: equal numbers of one- and two-egg nests (five each) were counted on one small corner only (20%) of the total area, so as to avoid disturbance of the colony. By 18 December 1975 about ten birds were sitting, with many birds flying overhead. By 23 December 1975 the terns had abandoned the area. Even though December is one of the peak months for holiday activity on Rottnest, there was no sign of footprints or broken eggs.

The terns did not attempt to nest at this site in December 1976. However, in 1977 they were first noted at the same site on December 4, and on 12 December 1977 about 100 birds were nesting. This time we noted several Silver Gulls amongst the sitting terns. By December 23, the colony had been abandoned. We suppose that human disturbance caused the terns to leave the nests, allowing the gulls to eat the eggs.

## BIRD NOTES FROM GREGORY SALT LAKE, GREAT SANDY DESERT, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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Gregory Salt Lake is centred in 20° 10'S, 127° 30'E, about 70 km SSW of Billiluna homestead at the northeastern edge of the Great Sandy Desert. When full it is about 50 km long, 25 km wide and up to 10 m deep, making it the largest natural body of landlocked water in Western Australia.

It was discovered by A. C. Gregory in 1856 when he followed Sturt Creek southwestwards. He rode all the way around the lake to convince himself it did not drain eastwards, westwards or further southwards.

Carnegie (1898) visited the area in 1896 on his return journey to the Coolgardie goldfields from Halls Creek. The few people who have visited the lake since then have been mostly geologists and pastoralists.

Most visitors have been impressed by the variety and abundance of waterfowl on the lake but little precise data can be gleaned from their accounts. For example, Carnegie, who camped at the lake in April 1896, wrote "The lakes and creek abound in wild-fowl of all kinds . . . so dense was the crowd of shags, pelicans, snipe, small gulls, whistling duck, teal, and other birds, that to say there was aere upon aere of wild-fowl would not be wide of the mark . . .". Fisheries and Wildlife Warden McDonald (1969) found the lake full (48 km long and 25 km wide), bird life "most prolific", and Pink-cared Ducks present when he visited the lake early in 1969. However, the amount of water in the lake (and consequently the number of birds there) varies greatly. Carnegie saw it full about one

month after heavy rains near the source of Sturt Creek. Gregory (1884) only describes waterfowl as "numerous" and then only along creeks draining into the lake.

We visited the lake on 6 and 7 November 1977 and followed the eastern bank south from the mouth of Salt Pan Creek to a point west of Len's Bore, a distance of about 13 km.

There are three distinct vegetation zones from the lake edge back to typical desert vegetation: a samphire zone about 1 km wide from near the water's edge to a belt of tall wattle about 100 m wide. The wattles in turn are flanked by a belt of eucalypts over scattered *Triodia*. Immediately beyond the eucalypt belt, which is about 1 km through, the desert with its sand ridges, *Triodia*, *Hakea lorea* and stunted Bloodwoods are encountered.

The following notes are from the lake and the samphire, wattle and eucalypt zones. Unless otherwise stated, waterfowl were on the lake or standing at its edge.

Black-throated Grebe (*Podiceps novaehollandiae*). A group of 10, another of 3 and a single bird.

Australian Pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*). About 420 in groups of 20-200 and 1-5.

Little Black Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*). About 330. Two groups of 100, several of 10-60 and several of 10 or less. The many hundreds of empty nests in the *Acacia* zone probably belonged to this species.

Little Pied Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*). Less than 10 seen.

Darter (*Anhinga melanogaster*). About 30, mostly single birds. A few groups of up to 6.

Pacific Heron (*Ardea pacifica*). Two together.

Great Egret (*Egretta alba*). Total of 25. One group of 17, otherwise single birds.

Black-necked Stork (*Xenorhynchus asiaticus*). One.

Royal Spoonbill (*Platalea regia*). Two together.

Black Swan (*Cygnus atratus*). About 400, most of them in two groups, one of 200 and another of 150. Two single birds, one with 6 cygnets and another with 3. Three old nests and one fresh nest with 4 eggs.

Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*). One group of 200.

Grey Teal (*Anas gibberifrons*). Total of about 3,500. One group of 2,500 and several of 200-300.

White-eyed Duck (*Aythya australis*). A group of 6.

Brolga (*Grus rubicundus*). Total of about 570. Two groups of 100 or more (150 and 100), 11 groups of 10-50 and 8 groups of 10 or less (2-9). A few feeding on samphire flats.

Coot (*Fulica atra*). One group of about 5,000.

Australian Bustard (*Otis australis*). A group of 5 and another of 6, all on samphire flat.

Masked Plover (*Vanellus uiles*). Total of 20 (group of 11 another of 5 and 4 single birds).

Red-capped Dotterel (*Charadrius ruficapillus*). Recorded as "fairly common".

Black-fronted Dotterel (*Charadrius melanops*). Six single birds.

Oriental Dotterel (*Charadrius veredus*). A group of 40, another 30, and one of 20.

Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*). Four together.

Wood Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*). Eight feeding on bank of floating yellow weed a short distance from shore.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (*Calidris acuminata*). Three groups: one of 6, one of 10, and another of 20.

White-headed Stilt (*Himantopus leucocephalus*). A group of 4 and another of 30.

Australian Pratincole (*Stiltia isabella*). Total of about 35. One group of 10 and another of 15, remained single birds.

Gull-billed Tern (*Sterna nilotica macrotarsa*). A total of 56. A group of 30, remainder in groups of less than 10. One ♂ collected.

Caspian Tern (*Sterna caspia*). Total of 32. One group of 20, remainder in ones and twos.

Whiskered Tern (*Sterna hybrida*). A total of about 70. Two groups of 10 and one of 50, some with black on bills. Some perched on floating yellow weed, just off shore.

Diamond Dove (*Geopelia euneata*). Six together in eucalypt zone.

Crested Pigeon (*Ocyphaps lophotes*). Three together in eucalypt zone.

Boobook Owl (*Ninox novaeseelandiae*). Calling from a eucalypt at night.

Spotted Nightjar (*Eurostopodus guttatus*). One hawking among eucalypts at dusk.

Red-rumped Kingfisher (*Halcyon pyrrhopygia*). One calling from eucalypts.

Bee-eater (*Merops ornatus*). One heard calling once.

Pipit (*Anthus novaeseelandiae*). A total of 10 on samphire flat.

Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike (*Coracina novaehollandiae*). One calling in eucalypts.

White-winged Triller (*Lalage sueurii*). One calling in eucalypts.

Magpie-Lark (*Grallina cyanoleuca*). One on samphire flat and another heard.

Grey-crowned Babbler (*Pomatostomus temporalis*). A party calling in eucalypts.

Red-browed Pardalote (*Pardalotus rubricatus*). One calling in eucalypts.

White-plumed Honeyeater (*Meliphaga penicillata*). Fairly common in eucalypts.

Orange Chat (*Epthianura aurifrons*). A total of 16 in parties of 3 or 4 on samphire flats; 2 ♂♂ and 1 ♀ collected.

Black-faced Wood-swallow (*Artamus leucorhynchus*). Two in eucalypts and 3 in wattles.

Pied Butcher-bird (*Craetetus nigrogularis*). One on nest with 2 eggs starting to chip, 7 m up in wattle.

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#### PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS ON THE KOONAC IN CAPTIVITY

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#### INTRODUCTION

The Koonac (*Cherax preissii* Erichson, 1846) is one of four species of fresh-water crayfish that are known to occur in south-western Australia. Except for the work of Shipway (1951) few observations have been published on the natural history of the Koonac.

During the Naturalists' Club Easter Excursion (24-27 March, 1978) to Northcliffe (lat. 34°38'S, long. 116°07'E), whilst collecting frogs at